

## Construction sector: slowing but still growing

Two recent surveys have shown that the construction sector continues to grow, despite a slow-down in recent months. PwC's Construction Industry Survey revealed that confidence in the sector remains high. The survey took into Account builders, developers and "those involved in the building materials sector".

It also showed that 59% of firms will increase their turnover this year, by more than 10%. This is only slightly lower than last year's 64%.

However, the sector does face a challenge in the skills gap it faces. Two-thirds of those surveyed said they had a hard time finding an employee with specific skills. Last year, only 45% had this problem.

The Ulster Bank purchasing managers' index (PMI) states that May, while still showing positive growth, had the slowest growth since last November. It also showed that job creation is on the up, but so is cost inflation, which has seen higher prices for fuel and raw materials.

Ulster Bank's PMI saw the greatest escalation recorded in the commercial sector; housing activity also rose sharply.

With the sharp increase in housing production this year, in response to the housing crisis, 44% of PwC respondents called for a new State Housing bank, which would serve to finance housing and provide affordable mortgaging.

## Coveney declares approval of HFA mortgage-rate cuts

The Housing Finance Agency (HFA), a non-commercial semi-state company under the aegis of the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government, decided today, Monday 13 June) to reduce the mortgage interest rate for variable-rate local authority borrowers by 0.25%, down to 2.3%. Simon Coveney TD, Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government has asked that local authorities pass this saving, effective 1 July, on to borrowers. Some 13,700 households will benefit from this decision.

The HFA have also finalised a €150m loan facility with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). This was the pay-off of groundwork laid by the previous minister. The CEB agreed to make the funds available to the HFA to finance social housing for low-income persons. Ministerial approval was required; the Minister confirmed such funds were released last Tuesday, 7 June. This funding is consistent with the Social Housing Strategy 2020.

The HFA have also reduced their Home Choice Loan mortgage interest rate by 0.25% to 3.25%. This scheme was established in 2009 to help middle-income first-time buyers buy a home. It offers a maximum loan of €285,000.

## Too many Dublin-based Board members, says Fitzmaurice

Minister for Transport, Shane Ross TD, has responded to a report carried out at the request of Independent Galway-Roscommon TD Michael Fitzmaurice which stated that 118 of the 155 board positions on Transport Boards were held by people who had Dublin-based businesses. In fact, Leinster, while containing 50% of the population, held 78% of board seats.

The analysis, done by former public servants, of the Boards revealed that, for example:

At the National Transport Authority, 11 out of 12 board members were Dublin-based;

- Six of the seven seats reserved for Irish members on Tourism Ireland's board were occupied by those with Dublin businesses;
- The Road Safety Authority, which is located in Ballina, Co Mayo, had seven of nine seats filled with members from Dublin.

Minister Ross has said that this was something he brought up during talks around the formation of government. As a result of this request for diversity and balance, geography will now be taken into account when applications are vetted by the Public Appointments Service.

## NCH Board appointments announced

Following the enactment of the National Cultural Institutions (National Concert Hall) Act 2015, The National Concert Hall (NCH) was placed on statutory footing.

In response to this, the new Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys TD, announced the new members of the Board for the NCH on Saturday 11 June.

She also announced her nominee for Chair designate as Maura McGrath. Ms McGrath must appear before a relevant Oireachtas Committee before her formal appointment can be announced. She has been a board member of the NCH since 2014.

The other board members are:

- Don Thornhill, Former Secretary General of the Department of Education;
- Eleanor Mc Evoy, Recording artist and performer who was also elected to the board of IMRO;
- Gerard Gillen, Former NCH Board Member (1986-91);
- James Cavanagh, Professor of Trumpet at the Royal Irish Academy of Music;
- John Reynolds, Former Chief Executive of KBC Bank;
- Máire O'Connor, Former partner at Ernst & Young and McCann Fitzgerald;
- Michael O'Donovan, Board member of Dublin Youth Orchestra; and
- Rebecca Gageby, NCH Board member since 2014.

All members were vetted by the Public Appointments Service and found to have sufficient relevant experience.



  
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## Harnessing people potential – Motivation and Talent

Getting the best from your people is critical to organisation results. Knowing how to harness and develop people potential is important for organisations and managers as they strive to develop talent in a challenging operating environment.

Our morning workshop will help you tackle these issues in your workplace.

It will be delivered by Keith McCarthy and Marian Byrne of Mazars Ireland.

It will take place Friday 17 June, 9.30am to 12.30pm.

Registration is free for members. Registration for non-members is €145. For more details, or to book, visit [pai.ie](http://pai.ie), email [info@pai.ie](mailto:info@pai.ie) or call us on (01) 819 8500



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## This week at Public Affairs Ireland

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#### Fiscal Advisory Council Delivers Some Unpopular Advice

Tom Ferris

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#### Futures Trading: Brexit and All-Island Trade

Martin McTaggart

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#### On the Programme for Government's Commitment to "A Vision for Change"

Dr Shari McDaid

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#### New Union merger talks given the go-ahead

Shauna Nimmo

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#### The Programme for Government 2016: A Summary

Shauna Nimmo

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### Did you enjoy the last issue of *The Public Professional*?

**We would like your feedback.**

If you haven't read it yet, you can find the first issue, for free, [here](#).

If you have any comments, ideas, or advice for the editor, we welcome you to email them to [editor@pai.ie](mailto:editor@pai.ie).

If you have any HR questions for our HR Helpdesk, you can also send them to us on [editor@pai.ie](mailto:editor@pai.ie).

**Looking forward to hearing what you have to say,  
Shauna Nimmo, Editor.**

# This week in Dáil Éireann

## Tuesday 14 June

2.00 p.m.  
Leaders Questions

2.32 p.m.  
Order of Business

3.02 p.m.  
Questions (Taoiseach)

3.47 p.m.  
Questions (Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport)

5.17 p.m.  
Topical Issues

6.05 p.m.  
Motion re: Standing Order 112 Select Committee (without debate)

Motions (2) re: Offences Against the State and Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act (to conclude after 80 minutes, if not previously concluded)  
(Department of Justice and Equality)

Energy Bill 2016 [Seanad] - Second Stage (resumed)  
(Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources)

Road Traffic Bill 2016 [Seanad] - Second Stage  
(Department of Transport, Trade and Tourism)

8.00 p.m.  
Private Members Business - Rent Certainty Bill 2016 [PMB] (Sinn Féin)

10.00 p.m.  
Dáil Adjourns

## Thursday 16 June

12.00 p.m.  
Leaders Questions

12.32 p.m.  
Order of Business

12.52 p.m.  
Revised Estimate (resumed) (Department of Health) (to conclude at 2.45pm if not previously concluded)

2.45 p.m.  
VOTING BLOCK TIME

3.30 p.m.  
Questions (Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources)

5.00 p.m.  
Topical Issues

5.48 p.m.  
Dail Adjourns

## Wednesday 15 June

12.00 p.m.  
Leaders Questions

12.32 p.m.  
Order of Business

1.02 p.m.  
Questions (Taoiseach)

1.47 p.m.  
Questions (Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)

3.17 p.m.  
Topical Issues

4.05 p.m.  
SOS

4.30 p.m.  
Private Members Business - Parole Bill 2016 [PMB] (Fianna Fáil)

6.30 p.m.  
Revised Estimates (Department of Education) (to conclude after 2 hours 30 minutes if not previously concluded)

Revised Estimate (Department of Health) (to adjourn at 10pm if not previously concluded)

10.00 p.m.  
Dáil Adjourns

# This week in Seanad Éireann

## Wednesday 15 June

10.30 a.m.

Commencement Matters

11.30 a.m.

Order of Business

12.45 p.m.

Motion regarding the election of the Leas Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann

Motions regarding the restoration of Bills to the Order Paper  
(Without debate)

Motions regarding the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009:  
Continuance in operation of Section 8 and Offences against the  
State (Amendment) Act 1998: Continuance of Certain Provisions  
(to conclude within 50 minutes)  
(Department of Justice and Equality)

4.00 p.m.

Private Members Business - (Fianna Fáil Senators)

6.00 p.m.

Seanad Adjourns

## Thursday 16 June

10.30 a.m.

Commencement Matters

11.30 a.m.

Order of Business

12.45 p.m.

Statements on delivering sustainable full employment  
(Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)

# This week's Committee Meetings

## Tuesday 14 June

Housing and Homelessness (Committee)  
CR3, LH 2000 10.30 a.m.  
AGENDA: Private Meeting

## Wednesday 15 June

Arrangements for Budgetary Scrutiny (Select)

1. CR3, LH 2000 11 a.m. (T)

AGENDA: (i) Legal advice on constitutional issues [Representative from the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Advisor]

(ii) Engagements with Ministers [Mr Michael Noonan T.D. Minister for Finance and Mr Paschal Donohoe T.D. Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform]

2. CR1, LH 2000 2 p.m.

AGENDA: Private Meeting

Business Committee

Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 5 p.m.

AGENDA: Private Meeting